

# The Whippet today

DOG WORLD asked a number of successful Whippet breeders the following questions:

**1 In what aspects is the Whippet breed in the UK strong at present? What areas could do with improvement? Is quality found equally through all the colours in the breed?**

**2 Overseas lines have made a considerable impact in the last decade.**

**Has this, in general, helped the breed in this country?**

**3 Are there any health or temperament issues breeders should take into account?**

**4 The breed is one of the most numerous in the show ring. Is its popularity a good thing in every way?**

**5 Which is the best moving Whippet you have seen?**

## Molly McConkey (Barmoll)

1 The Whippet in the UK is strong in numbers as well as quality. Their popularity I feel is due to their handy size, short coat, sweet temperament and very few health issues, in fact an ideal family companion with low maintenance, also a show dog for young and old.

The breed in its present state is quite stable; some have tried moulding the Whippet into a designer dog but it has such strong traditional lines/breed type, nothing much changed.

I would not say the breed needs 'improvement'; just keep in mind its original purpose and that the breeders should not get them over-exaggerated just for the show ring.

Quality can be found in all Whippet colours. The Standard states 'any colour or mixture of colours'; it's purely a matter of preference. Some people prefer a solid colour, others find a particolour more appealing while the blacks and blues have made a great comeback. They all have the same attributes because

underneath everything else is the same.

2 The majority of the 'overseas lines' originated from the English Whippet lines. The ease of travelling dogs from country to country has made the crossing of bloodlines very tempting. A few 'overseas' dogs have been quite influential when used correctly. Line-breeding I approve of and bringing in an outcross now and again is a must.

3 As with all breeds health and temperament must play a major part in our breeding programmes when choosing a stud dog and brood bitch. Generally health problems are very few and temperaments are good. It must be remembered they are a hound and instincts are bound to click in under certain circumstances.

4 Their 'popularity' reflects their versatility. Kennel Club puppy registrations are the highest in the hound group. Not every puppy makes the show ring; some race/lure course, do obedience and agility while others go as companions. Whippets have

recently taken top honours in the show ring, keeping them in the public eye.

5 Having loved, owned and shown Whippets for 50 years, I know many beautiful ones have come and gone, and to name just one would be unfair. Movement is something I put high on my judging criteria and on occasions can be the deciding factor to winning or losing.

## Molly Head (Demerlay)

1 The Whippet of today is generally much more powerful in profile movement and very few dogs 'pick up in front'. They are also, in the main, possessed of more length of loin, which makes them more balanced in outline to my eye.

On the down side, size has gone up almost certainly but with the advanced nutrition available on the market today, I feel this is only to be expected.

While colour may make for a difference in type, I think quality is to be found right across the colour range.

2 I have recently imported a young dog from the US and feel incredibly lucky to have him. There are many clever breeders in the UK without a doubt but how lucky are the breeders of the future to have the best Whippets in the world potentially available to them in their breeding programmes.

3 Generally our breed is healthy and long lived. That situation has changed very little since I bred my first litter almost 40 years ago. 'Sharp' dogs are encountered in the show ring from time to time and I personally feel that these dogs shouldn't be bred from, as good temperament is so important in any breed and this is totally untypical in Whippets and equally undesirable.

4 The large number of Whippets about doesn't feel such a good thing when competing against more dogs in a class than some breeds have in their entire entry!

Overall of course, the numbers just bear testimony to what a fabulous breed the Whippet really is. Total ease of maintenance, happy, friendly companions and one of the healthiest breeds we have. Amazingly they have never commanded huge prices but this has probably kept the puppy farmers away to a large extent, so must be counted an overall plus.

5 My favourite Whippet on the move has to be **Am Ch Plumcreek I'm A New Yorker**, he takes my breath away.

## Patsy Gilmour (Courthill)

1 In my opinion the Whippet is a 'bitch breed' and at this moment in time the strength of the breed is in the bitches. There are so many top class ones. When judging you are spoilt for choice.

We have got to be very careful - although we do not want short Whippets, extra length has been creeping into the breed. The whole front assembly has moved forward giving a dip behind the shoulder

making it impossible for them to hold the correct topline on the move. Without the correct topline and underline you have not got a Whippet, just a generic dog.

The breed can be any colour or a mixture of colours. Some colours are very pretty and draw the eye and the dogs may be very beautifully marked. You can have a better example that is not so pretty in colour and badly marked who could be easily overlooked. When judging you have to look though colour.

I do not think there is one colour better than the others. As said above some are more advantageously marked. The colours that are making strides are the blacks and blues.

2 The European bloodlines that have come in the country have alone made no impact. But the European dogs carrying the American lines have indeed made a great impact.

3 Overall health and temperament are good within the breed. We do have health surveys but nothing has come back in any great numbers to indicate there are any great problems.

4 Popularity has never been good for any breed. After 40 years plus in the world of purebred dogs, I have watched many breeds become decimated due to their rise in popularity. I hope that this does not happen to my beloved Whippets.

5 Over many years I have been fortunate enough to have judged in many countries and seen many lovely hounds. There have been many who have taken my breath away, so to single out would be impossible.

## Joanna Russell (Martinsell)

1 The Whippet breed is strong at present in that some particularly good and strong specimens are winning consistently. There are

no oversized or coarse dogs constantly in the top honours, as there have been in the past. Temperaments also seem excellent on the whole.

However, shoulders could improve greatly. The long, flat blade, so necessary for a balanced outline and length of stride, is sadly lacking these days. There are far too many short, coarse blades in the lesser classes, causing choppy, uneven action.

It is impossible to make generalisations about whether or not quality is found equally through all the colours. The great change is that blacks and blues can now hold their own. That certainly did not apply 50 years ago.

2 Yes, I think overseas lines have helped our breed immensely. The French breeder Mme Lempereur, for example, has done much to restore the classic fawn type with beautiful heads and pigmentation. Too many heads were bred with no stop and small, mean eyes. Sweden has also done a lot for the breeding here.

Generally, the Whippets from overseas have provided the extra glamour that is so essential in a graceful breed.

3 A recent health survey presented by the breed council has shown there are no major health issues. The wish to find problems where none exist has become far too prevalent. In my own experience bad health usually has an underlying cause, such as an accident or wrong medication. Temperament as above.

4 No, popularity is not a good thing as it leads to indiscriminate breeding by the unscrupulous. Breeders must breed from the best. Popularity causes pot-boiler production of indifferent specimens.

5 Mrs Lowe's **Ch Nimrodel Ruff** and Mrs Wilton-Clark's **Ch Shalfleet Sailing Free**.